

Boys don't cry by Pinchi

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Summary:

Hiding the tears in my eyes
Because boys don't cry

“Love hurts, sweetheart.” Steve hears Billy’s deep and mocking voice loud and clear in his ears, and tonight these words were never closer to the truth, physically and emotionally.

1. Prologue

Author's Note:

Hello everyone,
this is my first Harringrove fanfiction and my second work on this site. Please bear in mind that I'm no native english speaker, so I BET they are a lot of cringy mistakes here and there.

I fell in love with this ship and I had so much fun writing this! This will be a longer work. The Prologue is set into the future, and the actual story will start eight months prior to the events of this first chapter. Enjoy and leave a comment! (you can even call out my embarrassing mistakes lol)

Run. Run. Run!

Steve stumbles across the tree roots in the dark while he runs for his dear life. The snarls from the demodogs fill the cold air and are only drowned by the sound of his own heartbeat in his ears. The fog keeps building up and hinders his sight – like the blood from the wound on his forehead that keeps flowing down his face. *Shit.*

He collapses against a tree, tries to catch his breath and to get a quick overview of the different injuries he sustained this evening, or more like, in the last two hours. With is bat ready on the right hand, he pulls with the left hand the shredded and blood-stained pieces of denim and gauze from his left thigh away, only to flinch from the pain and the mere sight of the wound. Steve feels nauseous. One part of him wonders how he managed to run this far without dying and the other part in him wonders if the wound, by the looks of it, really reaches to his thigh bone.

Better not think about it too much...it's ok, it's ok, it's gonna be alright... yes, it's ok... He tries to calm himself down and slowly slides down the tree and grimaces as he tries to posture is injured leg on the ground. The adrenaline in his veins did the trick of keeping him running for maybe a quarter mile without fainting, but an injured boy with only a bat as protection against supernatural dangers can only get this far. A demodog tried to snatch a bite from his flesh

earlier, but thanks to Billy he didn't end up as a Demogorgon midnight snack. *Billy... Yes, I really shouldn't think about it too much.* The noise of the demodogs seem to get louder and louder. They come closer – and Steve smiles.

His plan worked. A sharp pain crosses Steve's head. *No, not my plan. It's Billy's.* Billy...only he would come up with something so stupid and yet so brave. Hopefully Billy would still be in the house, unconscious but still alive, when Hopper and the others arrive at the Byer's house. It was absurdly funny how he used Billy's idea against himself. Steve slowly touches his forehead where Billy's crowbar grazed him. The very same crowbar he used to knock Billy out, before he tried to knock Steve out. It was bizarre.

"Love hurts, sweetheart." Steve hears Billy's deep and mocking voice loud and clear in his ears, and tonight these words were never closer to the truth, physically and emotionally. Steve looks at his hand and the blood on it seems to glow a bit, his sight begins to blur around the edges. Suddenly everything was so cold and fuzzy. He leans back against the tree and amidst the chaos, pain, horror and worry Steve had to think about his father.

"Son, listen." The voice of his father echoes through his head as he remembers the time when he fell from his bicycle and scraped his knee bloody. He was maybe eight years old and cried his eyes out, because it hurt him so much. His father, standing before him, seemed so tall and menacing to his younger self, that he actually became afraid. "Boys don't cry. I know it hurts, but there will be other times when you get hurt like that, so you can't go crying like a little girl all the time. So, man up and get back on that bicycle." Steve chuckles a little and reaches for his bat. Yes, it hurt, but he sure as hell did not cry. He didn't cry out of fear when he fought against the Demogorgon with Nancy and Jonathan or when he set the vines on fire with the kids. He didn't cry when Nancy broke up with him.

He didn't cry out of pain when the demodogs attacked the Byer's house tonight and tried to kill him, he was only relieved that he was the only one that got hurt. Hopper, Mrs. Byers and the others left with the kids, so that Eleven could do her supernatural-crazy-telekinetic-stuff to fight against the mind flayer, or something like that. He didn't hear all the details of the plan when Billy patched him

up, he only heard how Billy tried to calm him down: "It's gonna be alright babe, I stay with you, they won't hurt you, I will keep watch."

He didn't cry out of anger when he heard how demodogs surrounded the house and how Billy tried to fight against them all by himself. When Steve tried to help Billy just shouted at him to stay back. Billy, filled to the brim with the power of his own fear and despair, managed to kill two demodogs with his crowbar only to hear Dustin's panicked voice over the walkie talkie that more of them were on their way, that the house wasn't safe anymore – that he had to protect Steve at all costs.

While his mind got darker by each minute, Steve thought about Billy and his desperate attempts of persuading him of his plan. "Steve, listen, don't be a fucking idiot now! I will lure them away from the house, you stay here! Hide. I can run away, you can't fucking run and I sure as hell won't carry you, or they get us both. You understand? Steve, *please*."

He sees himself, how he argues with Billy, "No, no, no, no, no... You don't understand. You won't be live bait for them", Steve leans against the table and balances on one leg, so that the burden on his other leg wouldn't be so heavy. He looks into Billy's eyes, sees the desperation, the fear, the *love*. "I will."

He sees the panic in Billy's eyes and the realization that Steve wouldn't step back calmly and do whatever he says. Billy, reaching for his crowbar, tries to subdue him and they start to fight against each other. Desperate, hurt and weak, running against the time, doing it for their love, hurting each other because of it. Billy grazes Steve's forehead and winces at the blood that keeps pouring from the sharp cut from the crowbar and drops it. Steve sees his chance. He grabs it and with the little bit of strength he has left in his arms he hits Billy's head as strong as he can to knock him out and as strong as he dares to hit him without seriously hurting him. Billy and Steve both fall on the kitchen floor. Lying back to back, Steve just breathes heavily, the whole fight didn't even last two minutes, but to him it felt like years. Hastily he checks if Billy's really just knocked out and calms down when he feels his pulse. He's alive. He will live. "Knew it", Steve stands up slowly, limping to the table, "thickheaded." One

last time he looks at Billy, whom he hated to so much eight months ago and now loved him so much, that he knocked him out without hesitation to save his life. There was no time to sit here and wait.

Steve is not stupid. Even though Billy said that he would run from the demodogs, he knew that they would get him sooner or later. And Steve just knows that he couldn't sit idly in the Byer's kitchen, not moving an inch to not get the demodog's attention while smelling like a butchered pig and waiting till they eat Billy alive and then him. They like blood. As far as he knows, they won't attack "dead" targets, so an unconscious Billy without bloody wounds is a Billy with a chance to live. Yes, Steve didn't cry. Billy would live.

As he limps out of the house with the bat in his hand, he made sure to spread his blood on his way to the forest, so that the demobastards could have a trail to follow, till he lost all his strength and collapsed, waiting for the monsters to arrive.

Everything is so blurry now. Steve didn't feel the cold anymore. Panting heavily, Steve looks at the moon above the tree tops and how the light illuminates everything with a silver shadow. *This is not a bad night to die.* Dying? Was he afraid of that? He wasn't sure. He thinks about Billy. Billy, beating the shit out of him. Billy yelling at him. Billy talking to him. Billy crying. Billy kissing him on a moonlit night like this one. Billy's hoarse laugh, when Steve made a witty remark, his blue eyes, which always seemed to mock him lovingly and desired him at the same time, his arms, his fingers, his body, his lips, his kisses, his words. Steve closes his eyes. He hears the growls of the demodogs really close and the rustling of something approaching him. At least they won't get him. Billy, Billy, Billy.

Steve opens his eyes when he felt warm and soft lips on his own.

"You didn't kiss me goodbye when you tried to crack my skull open, pretty boy."

Billy sits beside him on the cold and muddy forest ground and smiles like he doesn't have a single worry in the world. Steve feels the cold sweat on Billy's skin as he reached for his shoulders, proof that he ran all the way to him, catching up, even if his head probably hurt like hell. In the corner of his eyes, Steve notices at least five demodogs slowly surrounding them in circles. But for now, he only

looks into Billy's eyes. *Love hurts and boys shouldn't cry because of it*, Steve thinks when the tears swelled up in his eyes and the demodogs growled loudly because they could finally tear them to pieces.

"You fucking thickheaded idiot."

2. A bad day

Summary for the Chapter:

After Steve and the party had returned to the Byers' house, Steve had to deal with an unconscious Billy - and the consequences of him waking up.

Notes for the Chapter:

A new chapter!

We are still at the "Enemies" stage from my favorite tag, "Enemies to Friends to Lovers", so let's take it slow. Lots of headaches, a nervous Steve, angst and fighting ahead!

This chapter is of course from Steve's POV, I don't agree with the fact that he calls himself a "shitty boyfriend", but that's just how Steve thinks and that's what I tried to portray. Have fun!

I'm on tumblr @piinchi and twitter @pinchi_bell

Steve was glad that this day was finally over. It was...a bad day, one could say. Getting half beaten to death by Billy Hargrove or facing near death in some supernatural disaster with the kids wasn't something Steve would call a nice weekend activity.

After they set the vines on fire and escaped the demodogs, Steve returned the kids to the Byers' house. He drove Billy's Camaro and parked it next to Mrs. Byers' car. When he opened the car door he puked into the front yard. *Great*. Nancy waited at the front door, because Mrs. Byers and Jonathan took Will to the hospital and Nancy was sent after the kids to see if they are alright - only to find the traces of a fight in the kitchen, an unconscious Billy Hargrove on the floor and an unexplainable smell coming out from the Byers' fridge.

"What the hell happened? Where were you?" Nancy ran towards Mike and hugged him tight. "I was so worried, you were supposed to stay here! Why is Billy Hargrove --- *oh my god Steve!*" Nancy turned to

him and looked at his face. To see the worry in her eyes pained him more than all the bruises.

“I can explain everything, Hargrove-- “, answered Steve, but Dustin interrupted him.

“Sonofabitch cracked a plate on his head and beat the shit out of him. Steve lost the fight, but we still won the war. It was *awesome*. But what happened to Will, is he alright?”

A long discussion in the kitchen followed, where everyone at once tried to tell Nancy of their experiences with the demodogs and Nancy on the other hand tried to tell them what happened with Will until Steve puked again, this time on Mrs. Byers kitchen floor. “Eww... gross”, said Max and increased the distance between her and Steve, who sat next to her. “I’m fine, I’m fine, I’m sorry about the floor...” Steve tried to stand up to grab a kitchen towel and fell on his chair again. Was it just him or did the kitchen really start to spin in circles?

“I need to take you the hospital! It’s probably a concussion or even *worse*, who knows! Are any of you hurt?” Nancy turned to the kids.

“We’re good, but what about him?”, said Mike looking at the unconscious Billy in the other room, whom they blissfully ignored up to this point.

“Just let him die here”, said Max with the same look on her face when she saw Steve puking. “I agree, he doesn’t deserve any better”, muttered Lucas with a grim expression. “Maybe we’re lucky and he already kicked the bucket. He tried to kill me and Steve!”

“He’s probably just out like a light, the stuff from the syringe could knock an elephant out”, said Dustin and knelt next to Billy and slowly poked him on the shoulder. Billy groaned quietly, Dustin screamed and jumped back. “See, not dead”, he laughed nervously and crawled away from him.

Steve sighed. “We are definitely not leaving him here to die. And he won’t *die*, why are you all talking like this, seriously.” He looked at Nancy. “I will go to the hospital, but first bring the kids home – no Nance, I won’t discuss this,” Steve said when Nancy tried to say something. “I said that I will watch over the kids and I stand by my

word. I probably won't die in the next hour, I promise."

"But what about El? We need to know that she's safe!" Mike called out. "And Will's at the hospital too, I want to see him!" The noise grew louder when the kids decided to discuss this all at once again and Steve buried his head in his hands. "Ok, ok but *please* stop screaming, I'm getting a headache." Steve ran his fingers through his now not so styled hair.

"Nancy, you take the kids to the hospital first." The group cheered. "That's ridiculous, you and Billy are the ones who are hurt! Are you stupid?" Nancy couldn't believe it. "There's no point in arguing, they would probably run to the hospital as soon as you leave them at their doorsteps. And I can't just leave them here all alone while you drive me and the bastard to the hospital, it's not safe." Steve sighs again. "I shouldn't drive anymore. We don't fit all in the car, and it seems at least two of them aren't that eager to go when Billy's in the car as well. So I stay here. I could watch TV or something." Steve looks at Billy. "It's not like he will wake up anytime soon. And like I said, I won't die that easily."

Now it was Nancy's turn to sigh. "Steve Harrington, you are such an idiot."

Steve couldn't look at her face and turned away. "Yeah, I know." Nancy looked down. The kids packed their things and jumped over Billy like he was part of the furniture.

"Steve...we need to talk", Nancy looked him into the eyes. "Not now! Of course. But, you know, about what happened...with Jonathan. With us. And other stuff."

Steve shrugged. "I guess. Jonathan. You. Me. Stuff happened." Steve turned to Billy. "Could you help me? He's an asshole, but it feels kind of bad to leave him on the ground." Together they pulled Billy from the floor and dumped him on the couch. Billy let out a sigh and groaned a little.

"It's.... It's not like I didn't know, Nance." Steve looked only at Billy, he didn't want to know what her face looked like right now. Billy's face was relaxed and didn't carry the pained and angry expression it

had before. *Like a child*, he thought. Steve cleared his throat.

"I guess I knew it from the beginning. That everything's bullshit." Nancy winced. "Maybe I was just too stupid to realize. Or I didn't want to realize. I...I don't know." Steve adjusted Billy's legs on the couch. "I'm sorry, that I wasn't there for you the way you needed me to", he said quietly and inhaled deeply and breathed out. "But you should go now. Let's talk later."

"Yeah, let's talk later." Nancy's voice was trembling. Steve heard how she went to the door and stopped. "But Steve...I.... I'm sorry too. Take care." The motor of the car roared loudly when Nancy drove away.

Steve collapsed onto the couch next to Billy's head and covered his head with his hands. This evening was a little bit too much. He was still worried about the kids, the other kid that went with Hopper, the little Byers at the hospital, and somehow even about the older brother who seemingly stole his girlfriend. He sighed again. And the most surprising thing was, that he was worried about Billy Hargrove.

Of course, he was angry. Really *really* angry. No, that was an understatement. He was pissed. Steve touched his face and felt the swelling and bruises. It hurt like hell. He was pissed, *certainly*, but he already felt how his anger subsided while he looked at Billy.

"Why did you go after the kids like that? They're only children." No answer. The angry Billy, the teasing Billy, the furious Billy was still far far away. Steve was more pissed about the fact that Billy manhandled Lucas and threatened the kids than he was about getting beaten half to death.

"Why were you so damn angry?" Steve's voice grew louder. "Why can't you leave me alone at school? Why can't you mind your own business? Why did you try to beat me to a pulp tonight? What did I do wrong...yeah, what did I do wrong?" Steve buried his head in his hands again. It wasn't anger he felt, it was more like... sadness. Everything went wrong with Nancy, and he couldn't even protect the kids properly when Billy showed up.

He knew that Nancy's mind was elsewhere every time they were

together. He knew that she felt guilty about what happened to Barb. But – he didn't care that much about it. He wanted to have a nice and simple relationship with Nancy, but he didn't want to get too emotionally invested into the things she actually cared about. At least not like the way Jonathan did.

Steve cared about Nancy of course, he loved and admired her. He would protect her from any kind of danger, even if it would cost his life. But somewhere along the lines of their relationship he lost the feeling of actually being in love with her. He was more invested into the idea of a perfect relationship with plain and happy dates than to actually care about her deepest feelings. Every time she tried to talk about her worries he tried to distract her with things that didn't really matter.

And the fact that he knew that he didn't care about her real feelings deep down in his heart pained him right now. He wasn't sad that Nancy broke up with him. He kind of expected it. He had felt how they slowly drifted apart and how she lost her feelings for him. She had every damn right to do so. He loved her, but he wasn't in love with her. He only loved the concept of being in a relationship with Nancy Wheeler. She was a pretty and clever girl he truly admired, but he wasn't the one for Nancy. Jonathan was. Because he was there to help her when she needed it the most.

I'm really a shitty boyfriend, he thought and rubbed his eyes. At least he didn't cry, *that* would really be the end of everything.

Billy groaned and shifted his head. Billy Hargrove was another thing that stressed him out. Apart from this evening, Billy tried to provoke him at every given occasion, be it basketball, at parties or at school. It seemed like Billy wanted to prove something, but Steve wasn't sure what it was. If he wanted to be the "King" of school, Steve was the last person to stand in his way, he was sick of being called "King Steve" and everything that came with it. Billy tried desperately to get his attention, even though Steve didn't care one way or another about Billy Hargrove. Up to this point, Billy didn't hurt or harassed him seriously, but still, Steve got really nervous when Billy's around.

His *stares*. Steve closed his eyes. Billy's eyes seemed to follow him on every step he took at school. He wasn't stalking him, he only *stared*

when they were together. That was enough to make any person uncomfortable. *Maybe he just hates me that much.* Steve pulled his legs closer to his body and put them on the couch. With a sigh he rested his head on his knees and hugged his legs with both arms.

“You have to seriously hate someone to beat him up like you beat up me”, he said out loud. *What did I do to deserve this?* Steve ruffled through his hair and shook his head. But when it happened, it didn’t feel like hate at all.

He only saw desperation in Billy’s eyes and – surprisingly - fear. *Billy’s so self-confident and strong, what could he possibly be afraid of?* When Billy punched his face, it seemed like he didn’t actually see him, Steve, his rage wasn’t directed at him. There was just a general anger that seemed to consume him.

“Maybe that’s my imagination. Maybe I just rubbed him the wrong way and he hates me on a personal level. He seems to be a major douchebag when he treats kids like this”, Steve thought bitterly. “Or maybe I’m just a nice toy to relieve his boredom.”

One thing he was one hundred percent sure of was that Billy really looked at him like he was prey and Billy the predator. Especially at the court or the showers, he had this kind of *hungry* look in his eyes that left Steve confused. *What the hell could that possibly mean?* Was he out for blood? Did he want to fight Steve that bad? Steve hoped that the brawl finally lifted the tension between them and at the same time, he feared that it created a whole new agonizing one he wasn’t ready for.

Steve looked down at Billy’s face.

Billy didn’t look nearly as bad as he did, but Steve landed one or two good punches when they were fighting. The blood on his nose already dried up and his hair stuck on his forehead and covered his eyes. Subconsciously he brushed the locks away and surprised himself with doing so. He hastily pulled his arm away but couldn’t look stop looking at his face.

Bastard’s really kind of beautiful, he thought, even though it embarrassed him to admit it. *I can see why the girls fly to him, even*

though he's a douche. Steve took a moment to admire Billy's long eyelashes. He had never seen a person with such long eyelashes before, not even on a girl. He reached out to touch them but stopped himself. "What the hell am I doing?", he said to himself and shook his head. Billy really hit his head hard. He leaned back and sighed. And then Billy sighed – and Steve jumped from the sofa, because Billy started to move.

He wakes up?? What the hell! Steve was surprised and thought about what the fucking hell he should tell Billy about what happened tonight or what he should do when Billy attacked him again, because whatever the reason may have been, he never considered that Billy would wake up when both of them are alone. *Maybe I'm just that stupid.* Dustin could probably make up something on the fly, but Steve didn't have any talent in that department. Steve crawled away to a safe distance and sat on the floor.

Billy moaned and stretched his legs to the ends of the sofa.

"...Mom?" He slowly shook his head, covered his face with his hands and dragged them down his cheeks. "What.....why?", he murmured and slowly rose from his lying position, still holding his head in his hands.

"H-Hargrove? Are you ok?", asked Steve with a shaky voice, even though he couldn't understand why he asked in the first place – Billy was in a far better condition than himself, he was maybe a little bit drowsy, but he should saw that coming.

"Harrington...? But— ", Billy shook his head again. "Where is the little shit? Who...What's that on your face?"

At first Steve was angry, because Billy should really know where the bruises came from, but when he touched his forehead he knew what he meant.

"Band-aids. The kids tried to patch me up. Thanks to *you*, you know." He probably looked like he had a serious accident in a preschool class considering all the colorful band-aids that graced his face, but who actually cared, his face was a mess anyways. Steve thought that he saw remorse in Billy's face, but maybe it was just his imagination. He sat up and crossed his legs. Suddenly, his shoelaces were *damn*

fascinating and he started to play with them.

“Well...” He didn’t know what to say. “Are you ok?”, he asked his shoelaces.

“Where’s Max?” Billy’s tone was a little bit sharper, it seemed like he was finally fully awake. Steve decided to go with the truth, or at least with half of it.

“She’s at the hospital with the others. Will Byers ... got hurt, I guess. Nancy took them. They’re fine.” The black stuff on his shoes, could it be some kind of gooey demodog-fluid? Gross. Steve wiped his fingers on his already dirty jeans.

“Harrington.” Steve looked up and saw how Billy sat up and massaged the bridge of his nose with his left hand. The way he said his name actually brought shivers down his spine.

“What the fucking hell happened? Why did the little shit have a syringe full of drugs?” Billy growled with a smile, but he was certainly not amused. His tone was menacing. “Why were so many dipshits here? Why did she have *a bat full of nails* in her hands and dared to chop my dick off?”

“Well, uhm...you see...” Steve stumbled over his own words. *A pack of demodogs attacked us, Will Byers was possessed by the mind flayer, we fought against the Upside-Down?* No way he could say something like that. Billy wouldn’t believe him, no sane person would, and then he would kill him.

“And let me recommend you something first, amigo.” Billy bend forward and grabbed his knees, his knuckles turned white from his hard grip. “Don’t you dare lie to me.”

Steve gulped. What in Christ’s sake could possibly explain this freak show that happened tonight? His thoughts were like a merry-go-round, spinning in circles, he couldn’t catch up anymore. But then it clicked. Steve stood up and walked through the room.

“A dog.”

“A dog?”

“A rabid dog.”

Billy raised his eyebrows. His blue eyes pierced Steve as he walked behind the armchair. Steve wasn't a good liar, so he had to make his story as plausible as it could be.

“You see all the papers on the walls? The kids were planning to go on a treasure hunt. Byers even made a map and shit. Kids love stuff like that.”

Steve leaned against the armchair, he suddenly felt nauseous, but he wasn't sure if his head or Billy's piercing eyes were the cause of this.

“They wanted to go when it gets dark outside, for the thrill of it. I watched over them. But then BAM!” Steve clapped his hands and Billy flinched away. “This big black dog appeared of nowhere, foam coming from his mouth. It was insane. Bit Lil' Byers leg. I just grabbed him and we ran away.”

Billy's eyes told him he didn't believe a single word he said but Billy was still quiet, he judged the situation and observed Steve as he slumped into the chair.

“You see, we arrived here and his mother freaked out, *obviously*, and she went with him to the hospital.”

“Why did you stay here?” Billy rubbed his lips with his finger and continued to pierce him with his eyes. Steve got a little bit distracted. “*What?*”

“Why did you stay here with a bunch of kids when a mutt's been running around outside?”

Steve felt how the sweat ran down his neck.

“Police. I waited for the chief to arrive. The police have stuff against wild animals you know. And they needed a testimony from us. For the report.”

“For the report, I see.” Billy stood up slowly, still a bit unsteady on his legs.

“Yeah the report.” Steve laughed nervously. This whole situation was worse than fighting a bunch of demodogs.

“Chief Hopper arrived and had everything ready to hunt it down. That’s why the syringe was here. He went and you showed up. That’s all.” Steve tried to look into Billy’s eyes to fake some kind of confidence he actually didn’t have. Billy went slowly towards him and stopped in front of the armchair. With a loud *THUMP* he put his arms on each side of the armchair and came closer to his face, until they were only inches apart.

“I can smell a liar, Harrington.” Billy’s voice was a deep growl and he was far too close for comfort. He slowly breathed in and out, he still seemed a little bit drowsy.

“Didn’t know that liars smelled like Calvin Klein.” Steve had a glint in his eyes.

“You ain’t telling the truth, I can tell, I just can’t put my finger on it. Do you really think I believe your little bedtime story?”

“Max was right”, Steve spat. He had enough of Billy’s stupid antics and threats. “She was right to be afraid of you, she was more afraid of you than a rabid dog. She said you would kill her, kill us. That’s why I lied to you and said she wasn’t there. *She was right*, you made a bloody mess out of my face and you even threatened *children*. You’re only a bully who gets off on violence, hurting people. What will you do, hit me again? You already did that. I’m not afraid of you.” He pushed Billy away. “Now get off my face, I feel sick.”

Billy stepped back. “That’s... that’s what you think of me?” If Steve didn’t know it better he would say that Billy looked... *hurt*. He moved backwards and collapsed onto the couch. He covered his face with his right hand and chuckled like a maniac.

“Yeah, I’m scum who likes to beat the living shit out of people for fun. You really know me, Harrington.”

Steve wasn’t sure anymore. It was true that Billy’s an aggressive type, who got easily provoked and always wanted to be the one who holds the reins, but – Steve got the feeling, that he somehow hurt Billy more than Billy hurt him. But the fact didn’t change that Billy tried to threaten the kids and that he punched him half to death. The atmosphere in the room turned to ice, and Steve couldn’t stand the

tension anymore.

He jumped from the arm chair when he heard a car approaching. Both looked up when the head lights flashed through the windows, illuminating the sad state the room was in.

“Who’s that?” Billy asked. His voice seemed lifeless, like he wasn’t that interested in whoever decided to turn up on the Byers’ doorstep in the middle of the night. Steve didn’t care, it was a fucking god sent opportunity to escape the awkward situation they were in.

“It’s probably Nancy, she wanted to pick u--- not it’s Hopper!” Steve shouted. Now he had to act *really* quick to bring his tall tale to life. He stumbled to the door.

“Chief, did you kill the rabid dog that bit Will? Were you at the hospital?” Steve’s voice had a panicked undertone Billy didn’t seem to notice, he was still sitting on the couch, leaning back with one hand on his face. “*Please* play along” he whispered as Hopper entered the room. Hopper looked at Steve and then at Billy and understood at once.

“Yeah, yeah I did, kid. Are you alright? Heard that you got into a fight? Nancy sent me, she’s at the hospital.... because Will got bit.” The last part sounded a little like a question, but it worked.

“How are the kids? *All* the kids, I mean.” Steve asked. He thought about Eleven, who probably saved Hawkins tonight.

“Everyone’s safe.” Hopper smiled. “No need to worry. Will’s gonna be alright. Jonathan and Joyce are with him.”

Hearing that took a load of his mind.

“What about you two? Why did you fight? Nancy Wheeler’s been bugging me to get you, said that you were on the brink of death. She couldn’t leave her brother alone.”

“No, no, it’s not as bad as it looks like...I think.” His head still hurt like hell. “It was... a misunderstanding”, said Steve and fiddled with a band-aid on his forehead.

Billy had an utterly confused look on his face.

“He searched for his sister. I was still afraid of the dog and didn’t want to let him in. He got worried that I did something to her. That’s all.”

“Is that so.” Hopper rubbed his beard. He had probably figured everything out by now but decided not say anything.

“I will take you to the hospital now. A Doc needs to check your head, kid. What about you?” Hopper turned to Billy.

“I’m fine, Sir.” Billy looked on the ground.

“Are you sure? You’re still unsteady on your feet.” Steve tried to look at Billy’s face, but he turned his head away.

“’s fine. I can drive. Where are my keys?” Steve was quite sure that he wasn’t “fine” at all, but there was no point in arguing with Billy. “Wait, I grab them for you.”

“Don’t worry about your sister. I will take her home and explain everything to your father.”

“Thanks, that will help *a lot*, Sir.”

Billy sounded almost sarcastic and Steve was still left with the feeling, that Billy was kind of lifeless. It seemed like the furious Billy from before was gone.

Hopper stepped out and started the car and honked once. Billy turned to Steve and looked him in the eyes.

“You still didn’t explain me why Max had a bat with nails in it. Funny, how you had time to make this tonight. You wanted to protect the dipshits, right?

“Y-Yes.” Steve was baffled by the sad look on Billy’s face, it wasn’t like him at all. Billy opened the door of his Camaro.

“And don’t worry, I won’t touch her or the other kids. The rabid dog got killed tonight.” Billy smiled, but it seemed forced. “See you around, Harrington.”

Hopper honked again and Steve was left with a feeling of uneasiness. He was still angry at Billy, but he couldn't deny that he felt worried about him as well. A strange mix of feelings. Steve opened the car door.

"Are you really alright kid?", Hopper asked when Steve entered the car. He nodded and looked out the window.

"It was just a bad day, that's all."